The Emerald Tablet of Hermes

It is true, without falsehood, certain and most sure.

That which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below, to perform the miracles of the one thing.

And as all things have arisen from one, by the thought of one, so all things are born from this one thing by adaptation.

Its father is the Sun, its mother the Moon; the Wind has borne it in its belly, and the Earth has nourished it.

It is the father of all perfection throughout the world.

Its power is whole if it be turned into earth.

Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with great skill.

It rises from earth to heaven and descends again to earth, receiving the strength of things above and below.

Thus you shall possess the glory of the whole world, and all darkness shall flee from you.

This is the force of all forces, for it overcomes every subtle thing and penetrates every solid thing.

In this way was the world created.

From this come marvelous works, of which the means are here revealed.

Hence I am called Hermes Trismegistus, holding the three parts of the wisdom of the whole world.

What I have said of the work of the Sun is complete.

Extrapolation of Meaning

The final translation encapsulates a multilayered teaching that can be explored through several lenses:

1. Alchemical Process

The Tablet outlines a practical alchemical method, likely for creating the Philosopher’s Stone—a substance believed to transmute metals and confer immortality. The separation of earth from fire and the cycle of ascent and descent suggest distillation, purification, and recombination, mirroring laboratory processes like calcination and sublimation. The "work of the Sun" may symbolize the Stone’s golden perfection.

2. Spiritual Journey

Symbolically, it depicts the soul’s path to enlightenment. The "one thing" is the divine essence within all, and the process reflects inner transformation: separating the subtle (spirit) from the gross (body), ascending to divine insight, and returning enriched. The fleeing of darkness signifies liberation from ignorance, aligning with mystical traditions.

3. Cosmic Unity

"As above, so below" underscores a holistic worldview where microcosm (humanity) and macrocosm (universe) reflect each other. Mastery of this principle allows one to influence reality, bridging material and spiritual domains—a key Hermetic concept.

4. Balance of Forces

The Sun and Moon represent dualities (e.g., masculine/feminine, light/dark). Their union, nurtured by Wind and Earth, suggests harmony as the source of power, applicable to both alchemy and personal growth.

5. Universal Power

The resulting force—penetrating solids and overcoming subtleties—implies a transformative potential that transcends limitations, whether physical (transmutation) or metaphysical (wisdom). It’s a promise of mastery over nature and self.

6. Hermetic Wisdom

Hermes’ threefold wisdom integrates spiritual insight, psychic awareness, and corporeal knowledge, offering a comprehensive philosophy. The Tablet thus serves as a guide to understanding the universe’s structure and our place within it.

In essence, the Emerald Tablet is a timeless blueprint for transformation—alchemical, spiritual, and philosophical—rooted in the unity of all things and the pursuit of perfection through knowledge and balance. Its enduring influence lies in its ability to inspire across disciplines, from medieval alchemists to modern seekers of wisdom.

The Riddle of the Tablet.

I am without falsehood, I am below as I am above, All things are born of me, my father is the sun and my mother, the moon, wind bears me in its belly, and the earth has nourished me. I am the father of all perfection throughout the world, my power is whole if turned into Earth, I rise from the earth to heaven, I descend again to earth, given strength. I am the force of all forces, From I comes marvelous works, what Am I?

The answer to the riddle is the Philosopher's Stone.

This legendary substance from alchemy fits the description provided in the riddle. The Philosopher's Stone is often described in alchemical texts as a pure, divine substance ("without falsehood") that exists in harmony with the cosmos ("below as I am above"). It is said to be the source of all creation ("all things are born of me"), with symbolic ties to the sun (father) and moon (mother) due to its association with celestial and elemental balance. The wind and earth references align with its mystical creation process, involving air and earth elements. It is considered the "father of all perfection" because it was believed to perfect matter, turning base metals into gold and granting immortality. Its power is complete when transformed into a tangible form ("turned into Earth"), and its cyclical journey from earth to heaven and back reflects its transcendent nature. Finally, it is the "force of all forces," capable of marvelous works like transmutation and elixir creation.

What is the Philosopher's stone?

The Spirit. Acquisition of the Spirit through Gnosis.